

Town Government Study Committee 2014

Town Hall, Great Hall

August 27, 2014

Committee: Chair Katherine L Babson Jr. , Vice Chair Rose Mary Donahue, Arthur J Goldberg, Ann Marie Gross, Anna Sereiko, Thomas Ulfelder, Linda Perlmutter

Chair Babson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She advised the Committee that the meeting was being cable cast by Wellesley cable. There were no citizens present to address the committee.

DEPARTMENT INTERVIEW REPORTS:

Thomas Ulfelder presented a summary report on interview with Police Chief Cunningham and Fire Chief DeLorie which were conducted on August 12 with Katherine Babson.

Police- Wellesley has a strong chief model for department. The Chief has broad day-day management authority and reports to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). The annual budget is developed by the Chief and is submitted to the BOS for review. The Chief likes reporting to a multimember board. The chief also supports the current timing of Annual Town Meeting and says the budget development process is positive with careful analysis of budget submissions. A possible issue with a town manager is whether the person has the background to be fully versed in issues specific to the police department.

Goldberg asked if the chief has independent budgeting authority.

Babson replied that the BOS reviews the budget and incorporates it into the General Government budget presented to Town Meeting.

Serieiko asked what other interactions the chief has with BOS.

Babson replied that the Chief operates the daily activities of the department without interference from the BOS. However in certain situations the chief does communicate with the BOS and Executive director to keep them informed. The BOS has supervision and evaluation authority over the chief. The BOS negotiates employment contract and compensation for the chief. The chief recommends officers for appointment to the force and the BOS approves the appointment.

Gross asked how communication and cooperation for the “across town” activities of the police are affected by the current govt structure.

Ulfelder replied that the police chief feels the current communication/cooperation works well to serve town needs. In certain circumstances(snowplowing as an example) a single decision maker could be more efficient, but overall he is happy with current model.

Fire – The Fire Department has many instances where they are first responders to situations until the responsible department is able to take over. Chief doesn't see any "turf" issues as a problem. He does not see the need for a single manager. He also reports to the BOS and likes the multimember board situation. He sees the decentralized system as allowing for broader input of the community. He cited the 2013 drowning at Morses Pond to be a good example of productive interdepartmental cooperation that produced useful recommendations for public safety. He had some comments on project management. The FMD designs and operates facilities for town departments. PBC is charged with construction of larger projects, then FMD takes on responsibility post construction. This system means there are different people in charge of projects at different phases. There may be some challenge to efficient project management due to this system.

Perlmutter asked what would happen in either Police or Fire departments if an issue arose that did not "go well". Are there adequate safeguards in place to protect the town.

Babson replied that Wellesley is fortunate to have excellent managers in both departments. The chiefs do stay in touch with BOS for high profile situations. Ultimately the BOS has the authority for supervision and performance reviews of the chiefs. The BOS determined that a strong chief situation was appropriate for Wellesley and support that decision.

"BUCKET LIST" of IDEAS (Concord chart of ideas)

Babson presented a document prepared by the Concord Town Government Study Committee that is a chart of ideas generated by their work and an analysis of possible actions to pursue. She asked the committee to consider this model as a way to organize the TGSC work going forward.

STATUS OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (List of Assignments/Master Calendar)

Various committee members reported on their progress in scheduling interviews. Committee members will report when meetings are scheduled to be added to master calendar.

Babson requested that committee plan to attend Hans Larsen presentation on the Town Wide Financial Plan on October 1, and be prepared to attend TGSC meeting with former Moderators that same evening.

Babson announced that former Advisory chairs from 2000 to the present will be invited to meet with the Committee on October 8 at 7:30 pm and October 9 at 1:00pm at the Library. All Committee members encouraged to attend one session.

Babson asked committee to consider meeting with managers from other towns- Lexington, Reading and Middleborough by setting up appointments in their towns during the day. Babson will set up teams to do those interviews.

Gross asked about other neighboring towns – Needham and towns of similar size.

Babson suggested these external interviews be postponed on the calendar until the committee had more local data and have better sense of the questions to ask other towns.

Gross asked if Michelle would be able to put together a list of towns by size and type of management structure.

#### TOWN CLERK

Babson asked Goldberg to join her in review of Town Clerk position.

#### IDEAS LIST

Babson distributed a list of ideas generated to date. She asked Committee to add to this list as ideas are generated from any source. This list will be a working document and all ideas can be added without "prejudice". Analysis of the merit of ideas will come later in the process. This is a way to be sure the committee doesn't overlook any ideas offered.

Gross suggested an email for the committee so that the public can have input in an easy manner. Nagle to set up the email address for public use.

#### PLANNING FOR STM

Babson stated that the BOS has asked the committee to wait until ATM for any action on articles. This STM has a very full agenda.

#### CHARTER COMMISSION

Babson explained that process of establishing a charter commission. A petition signed by 15% of voters must be submitted to begin the process. Then the question goes to the voters and there is also an election of 9 commissioners. The commissioners then develop the charter which goes back to the voters for adoption. Wellesley looked at Charter Commission in 1976 but decided to go with a revision of the bylaws. The Charter process is defined by state law .

Babson will do some more research to understand the pros and cons of charter. Nagle will assist.

#### SECRETARY

Babson suggested that the committee elect a secretary to assist with management of committee documents and other duties. It was agreed that preparation of minutes would be shared among the committee for meeting that Nagle cannot attend. Babson nominated Ann Marie Gross for secretary. Ulfelder seconded. Gross was elected Secretary.

#### MINUTES

Committee approved the Minutes of July 23.

#### NEXT MEETING

September 3. Current and former BOS members are invited to attend.

Adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Submitted by Kathy Nagle

#### LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Master Calendar

List of IDEAS to consider

List of assignments

DRAFT